Ex-Sergeant Allan's Death Recalls Early Incidents of District

John Allen, Northwest Mounted Police veteran, died on Thursday afternoon, Sept. 22, after taking his daily walk.

Turning his 75th milestone on March 12 this year, Ex-Staff Sergt. John Allan, R.C.M.P., who lost his sight four years ago, had varied experiences during his life. During his police service he was popular among members of the Force and the public at large.

Serving from 1886 to 1889 on Edinburgh City Police Force, he proceeded to Australia and there joined the New South Wales Police, serving from May 1889 to October 1896. Spending a short time in Sydney, most of his service was in the western division at Bathurst, Madgee and Dubbo. Following his police service he proceeded to Western Australia, spending a period from October 1896 to May 1897 working on railroad construction in the big timber area between Donnybrook and Bridgetown, 150 or 160 miles from Perth, where the hardwood trees of blue and red gum 12 and 14 feet through, grow.

Deciding to attend Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, young John Allan with a number of others sailed from Albany and after much sightseeing and an interesting voyage on the S.S. "Orizaba" arrived at Tilbury Docks in London two days before the Jubilee. Spending two months at his former home in Scotland, he booked passage on the S.S. Numidian, of the Allan Line, for Canada. On board were a number of members of the North West Mounted Police, who attended the Jubilee and among whom was Hospital Staff Sergt. "Doc" Tulloch. Stopping off at Regina to see the sights, "Doc" Tulloch took him to see Supt. Joe How (well known at Macleod) who was O.C. Dept. and which resulted in young John Allan enlisting as regimental No. 3188 in the N.W.M.P. Spending the time from August 27, 1897, to two days before Christmas in barracks, he was transferred with 21 other men to the Yukon.

The party arrived at Vancouver, December 29, 1897 and on January 2, 1898 embarked on a Seattle boat, "Some Maid", and steamed for four days, landing at Skagway, where they spent two weeks before proceeding to the Summit and to pull their own outfits across Summit Lake to Bennett, thence to Caribou Crossing, which is a story in itself. While in the Yukon, Allen met Jim Lambert, Jack ("Smoky") Allen and John Storm Piper, all well known in Macleod. On December 31, 1899 at Bennett, Allan quit the police and opened up a Customs-brokerage office, which he operated for twelve months, after which he came out via Skagway and Vancouver and for the first time arrived at Macleod, enlisting again on April 2, 1901 in the N.W.M.P. for service in South Africa; but, with Supt. Deane as O.C., he was not permitted to go. Spending from a month to six weeks in barracks, he was sent out on his first single detachment—the Peigan detachment—with first "Grassy Water" as police Indian scout and later "Sarcee Man". Remaining on the Peigan reserve until February 1902, he was sent to Blairmore. There was then nothing at Frank except the mine stable; nothing at Coleman—the river course had not then been changed. There was also nothing at Bellevue, Hillcrest and Lille.

Next summer in June saw the police established in the old sanitorium log building as a detachment, and in January, 1903, the year of the slide, Constable Allan was made a corporal.

The slide occurred at 4:55 a.m., April 29, 1903, and in his own words Mr. Allan stated, " I got word that the train could not get through and that something had happened as the wires were all down and no word could come through. If the train had been five or ten minutes earlier it would have been buried under the slide too. Inspector Davidson and I rode into the Pass as far as Bob Connelly's place where Bellevue now stands, where we left our horses and walked to Frank on the Little side of the mountains.

"It took 4,000 Japs one month to put the railroad over the slide, working twenty four hours in 8-hour shifts each day. The road was cut around the Lille side of the slide and busses transported passengers, freight and express from one train to the other during the road construction. When clearing the debris for the railroad the blasting caused some four feet of snow to fall about the middle of May in Frank, and newly born calves of Pass ranchers and miles east in the Pass were smothered and died as a result of the depth of the snow.

"Our barracks were used as a hospital and several people were brought in with broken legs and other injuries. Two Graham families, ranchers and foreigners living in dugouts along the river bank got caught.

"There were some 80 odd persons killed by the slide. The two-storey school house was used as a morgue. On occasions a head or arms or other parts of bodies were brought in and Coroner Bill Anderton, of Macleod would come up weekly, have juries empanelled and endeavoured to have the portions of the bodies identified. Very few were able to be identified. Crowds dug in from outside the mine. C. Chesnut had a gang that dug for two days and into the third so that a hole could be put through the shaft to permit the entrapped men in the mine to crawl through, and then enlarged the hole to get the horses out—only one was alive and it died soon after being freed. It had been in the mine four weeks after the slide occurred and had been able to get a little water.

In one house were the father and mother and one child, two brothers in another room and two sisters in another bedroom—all were killed except the two sisters, one of whom had her leg broken and the other was untouched. Leach and the baby also were untouched. They were in one of the three houses that were hit.